COMMANDERS DIGEST
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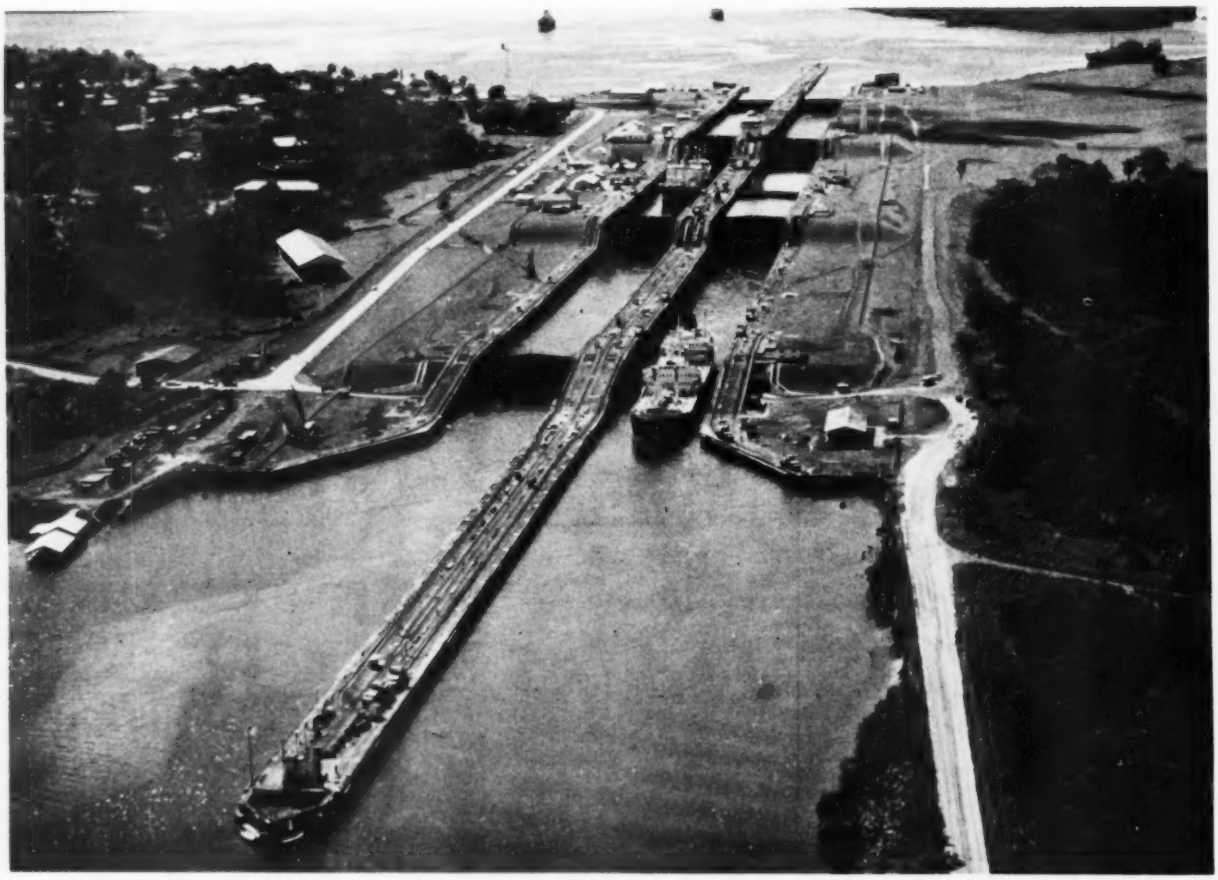
U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

How It Operates

U.S. Southern Command in Latin America



The Gatun Locks are part of the Panama Canal—a major "funnel for world commerce."

By
General W. B. Rosson, USA,
Commander in Chief,
U. S. Southern Command

The United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) was established as a regional, unified command on June 6, 1963, with the redesignation of the former Caribbean Command. From its headquarters at Quarry Heights, Canal Zone, the USSOUTHCOM serves as the organizational arm of the Department of Defense in Latin America responsible for supervision of Security Assistance Programs, provision of U. S. military representation in the region, and defense of the Panama Canal. Other responsibilities include administration and support of U S. Military Groups (USMILGPs) and U. S. Military Assistance Advisory Groups (USMAAGs), support of combined Inter-American training exercises, disaster relief and search and rescue operations.

The presence of a unified command on the Latin American scene emphasizes the Nation's long-term interest in the region. USSOUTHCOM is a concrete manifestation of U. S. interest in security assistance matters, not only for Panama, but for all of Latin America. The command lays emphasis on coordination and cooperation with all Latin American countries. As a visible U. S. military presence, USSOUTHCOM maintains close and continuous contact with armed forces of Latin America.

The Southern Command equates with other U. S. unified commands in other geographic areas and maintains a high level of interest in U. S. objectives and activities in its area. It is significant in

this regard that the United States has important trade relations with the countries of Latin America. We provide 40 percent of their imports; we buy a third of their exports, amounting to over 6 billion dollars annually. U. S. private investment in the region exceeds $16 billion. Latin America's abundant natural resources, much of which are yet untapped, will provide the region with new initiatives so essential to its own internal development and relations wth other continents.

The Panama Canal is of strategic importance to the United States, as well as being a major commercial asset to the nations of the world. The Canal, properly termed the "funnel for world commerce", is of major importance in fostering American/world trade relationships. A steady trade growth has occurred in annual commercial transits from 5,448 oceangoing commercial vessels in 1950 to 14,238 during Fiscal Year 1973. The strategic value of the Canal is often taken for granted after more than a half century of uninterrupted operation. It remain a vital factor in our ability to deploy operational forces and logistic support rapidly between the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean areas.

Southern Command's responsibility encompasses the land masses of Central and South America, excluding Mexico but including the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean, with responsibility for adjacent water areas being vested in the Atlantic Command (LANTCOM). U. S. Readiness Command (USREDCOM) is responsible for providing air and ground augmentation in support of USSOUTHCOM's emergency requirements throughout the region. The resultant command and control complexities necessarily require close coordination with LANTCOM and USREDCOM in the development of plans and other support procedures.

MAAG Groups

USSOUTHCOM is the product of a long record of cooperative U. S. military association with Latin America. Our presence does not stem from the post-World War II implementation of the Security Assistance Program, but dates back to 1922 when a U. S. Navy training mission was established in Brazil. Our U. S. Military Groups and U. S. Military Assistance Advisory Groups are

Soldier, Scholar

General Rosson Heads Southern Command

Soldier, scholar, community leader—these are some of the many facets of General William B. Rosson, Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command, since January 17, 1973.

Born in Des Moines, Iowa, on August 25, 1918, he began his military service in June 1940 at Fort Lewis, Washington, as a second lieutenant of infantry, following graduation with a Bachelor of Science in business administration from the University of Oregon.

When only 25, General Rosson was a major commanding an infantry battalion in Europe. During World War II he fought through 10 campaigns with the 3rd Infantry Division, starting in North Africa in 1942 and moving through the intense fighting in Sicily, Italy, France and Germany.

At Anzio in 1944, he won the Nation's second highest combat award, the Distinguished Service Cross, for extraordinary heroism during a night attack against enemy forces entrenched near the vital town of Cisterna.

General Rosson returned to Europe in 1951 for assignment in the Plans, Policy and Operations Division of Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Paris, France.

General W. B. Rosson, USA

General Rosson commanded the 39th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division, in Germany, from June 1955 to June 1956.

In 1956, he began a three year assignment with the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

After graduation from the National War College in 1960, he returned to Germany as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, U.S. Army Europe. In April 1961, he assumed the duties of Assistant Division Commander and Airborne Brigade Commander, 8th Infantry Division. From February 1962 to July 1963, he served in Washington as Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, for Special Warfare, and as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations.

In June 1965, General Rosson was assigned as Chief of Staff, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. In April 1967, he was placed in command of Task Force Oregon, a provisional division organized for operations in the I CTZ, Republic of Vietnam. On July 31, 1967, he was named Commanding General, I Field Force, Vietnam.

General Rosson was assigned Deputy Commanding General of Headquarters, U. S. Military Assistance Command (Forward) on March 1, 1968. Nine days later that headquarters was reorganized as the Provisional Corps Vietnam, and General Rosson became the Commanding General.

General Rosson returned to the United States on July 31, 1968 to assume duties as Director, Policy and Plans Directorate, Joint Chiefs of Staff. He remained in Washington until April 1969, when he was assigned as Special Assistant to COMUSMACV, MACV HQ, Saigon, Republic of Vietnam. On May 1, 1969, he was designated Deputy Commander, USMACV, and served in that position until October 16, 1970, when he assumed command of United States Army Pacific, Fort Shafter, Hawaii.

ENGINEER SUPPORT—Members of the 518th Engineer Company, 193d Infantry Brigade, put the finshing touches on a pontoon foot bridge. Building bridges and various engineer support are a few of the jobs the unit provides throughout Central and South America as part of the United States Southern Command.

stationed in Latin American countries as a result of mutual arrangements with the host governments.

USSOUTHCOM relationships with host-country armed forces must accommodate diversity in operational missions and capabilities of the particular country. Our USMILGPs/MAAGs are tailored in size and expertise to the specific advisory and assistance requirements of individual country's armed forces. The Guardia Civil of Costa Rica is oriented towards internal security and a strong police force, necessitating a far different advisory and assistance relationship than that required by the armed forces of Brazil, Argentina or Venezuela. In other countries, such as Nicaragua and Panama, the armed forces are paramilitary organizations with responsibility for police, military and national development activity.

A most important aspect in military-to-military relationships is the distinctive role of maintaining personal contact. Assignment of a senior U. S. military officer in Latin America permits timely and candid exchange of views at the highest levels of military authority. Much time and effort go into representational visits to those countries where we have USMILGPs/USMAAGs, and in hosting reciprocal visits by Latin American armed forces officials. These exchanges have contributed to and continue to influence the favorable development of mutual respect and cooperative endeavor between the U. S. military men and their counterparts in this hemisphere.

Canal Zone Defense

Defense of the Panama Canal is one of Southern Command's major responsibilities and is the one to which the majority of assigned forces is dedicated. Forces available for the accomplishment of this mission are provided through Service component commands and stateside-based military resources.

Army Component

USSOUTHCOM's Army component, U. S. Army Forces Southern Command (USARSO), is headquartered at Fort Amador on the Pacific side of the Canal Zone. USARSO is commanded by World War II Medal of Honor winner Major General George L. Mabry Jr. The Army command is primarily responsible for providing ground combat and support forces for the defense of the Panama Canal.

In furtherance of its Canal defense mission, USARSO must be prepared to protect installations important to the operation of the vital waterway. All defense preparations require coordinated planning and training with authorities of the Canal Zone Government as well as the other Service components.

The major elements of USARSO include the 193d Infantry Brigade; the 3d Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group; the 3d Civil Affairs Group; a Logistical Support Command, the 210th Aviation Battalion; the U. S. Army School of the Americas and the Jungle Operations Training Center.

The 193d Infantry Brigade is the element primarily concerned with Canal defense. To carry out this mission, it has three infantry battalions assigned, one of which is mechanized. One of the other infantry battalions has an airborne company for use as an immediate reaction force. The Special Forces battalion augments Canal defense and provides mobile training teams (MTTs) to Latin American Armed Forces. The 3d Civil Affairs Group plays a major role in disaster relief and furnishes considerable civic action assistance to Panama.

Among the aircraft assigned to USARSO in its aviation battalion are five U-21s, which are used extensively for travel by Military Groups in such close-by nations as Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The 26 UH-1 Huey helicopters furnish the primary troop airlift for the Army forces, while seven OH-58 helicopters are used mainly for command and control by the infantry

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MAPPING—Students of the Cartographic School of the Defense Mapping Agency's Inter-American Geodetic Survey (DMA-IAGS) practice geodetic leveling in a river bed. DMA-IAGS has been working on the mapping of Latin American countries for more than 25 years in producing map and geodetic data.

brigade. In all, USARSO presently has a total of 41 aircraft assigned, 33 helicopters and 8 fixed-wing.

Navy Component

The Navy component is the United States Naval Forces Southern Command (USNAVSO), the smallest of the USSOUTHCOM components. It is also headquartered at Fort Amador and is under the command of Rear Admiral Robert H. Blount. Though the naval component is small, the geography of the Isthmus emphasizes the requirement for naval cognizance, since the Panama Canal connects the world's largest bodies of water. The Commander of USNAVSO is my principal advisor on naval matters and simultaneously is the Commandant of the 15th Naval District. As Commandant, he is responsible for the support of U. S. fleet units and for the support of transient free world naval units, including those of Latin American navies.

COMUSNAVSO wears a third hat as the Commander, Panama Sector, Caribbean Sea Frontier. In this capacity he answers to the Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, and is responsible for planning to control such naval forces as may be assigned for antisubmarine and mine countermeasures warfare. During manned orbital or space missions, the Command's operations center maintains a plot of all shipping which could provide assistance in the event of a general emergency.

Air Force Component

The air component is the United States Air Forces Southern Command (USAFSO), with headquarters at Albrook AFB, commanded by Major General Arthur G. Salisbury. COMUSAFSO is responsible to me for advising on and execution of those portions of the USSOUTHCOM mission which require USAF support. USAFSO missions include: the air defense of the Canal area, tactical air support of USSOUTHCOM land and sea forces, the air portions of disaster relief and civic action projects, and search and rescue (SAR) responsibility for U. S. aircraft over all of Central and South America. The major USAFSO units are the 24th Special Operations Group located at Howard AFB and the Inter-American Air Forces Academy at Albrook AFB.

In all, USAFSO normally has 31 aircraft on duty with it in the Canal Zone. These include six C-130 Hercules from the Tactical Air Command in the United States which provide rapid support to USSOUTHCOM's commitments. These aircraft have been workhorses in the numerous disaster relief airlifts of USSOUTHCOM in Latin America in recent years. Three C-123s supplement command airlift support and give a paratroop airlift capability. The C-123s are assigned to the U. S. Air Force Reserve and are operated by Reserve personnel on temporary active duty. Close air support is furnished by four A7D aircraft of the Tactical Air Command. Five twin-engine UH-1N helicopters are used extensively and effectively in civic action programs, and three HH-3 helicopters play a major role in the conduct of

search and rescue operations within our area of responsibility.

In addition to on-site component assets, rapid reinforcement by CONUS augmentation forces is an integral part of the basic defense concept. Such forces are specifically earmarked for deployment to support USSOUTHCOM in a variety of situations.

Zone Civil Authorities

An inherent part of USSOUTHCOM's responsibility for the defense of the Panama Canal is the need for close working relationships with the Governor of the Canal Zone, who is also the President of the Panama Canal Company, and the U. S. Ambassador to Panama. Continuous cooperation is maintained among the various military/Canal Zone Government elements and members of the Ambassador's Panama Country Team.

Security Assistance Role

The administration and monitoring of the Security Assistance Program is one of USSOUTHCOM's most important missions. As a part of this role, the command administers the Security Assistance Program in Latin America, including the efforts of our Military Groups and MAAGs in 16 countries, conducts our Latin American military training programs in the Canal Zone, and assists in the conduct of Foreign Military Sales activities throughout Latin America. In the words of President Nixon, "the purpose of U. S. security assistance is to ease and to speed the transition to greater national self-reliance." To that end, our Security Assistance Programs in Latin America are designed to support several distinct objectives. First and foremost, our efforts have been to assist in the development of country armed forces which, in conjunction with civil police and other national security forces, will be capable of maintaining that degree of internal stability which is necessary for orderly political, economic and social development. The armed forces are also encouraged to participate in civic action projects which contribute to internal stability. Force levels and defense expenditures are related to desires for modernization, to other demands on national resources, and to the security needs of each country.

The development and subsequent management of the total Security Assistance Program is an important and continuing responsibility of USSOUTHCOM. Development of the program is accomplished through the Program Objectives Memorandum (POM), the primary planning document. The POM planning process is a major annual effort for the USMILGPs/USMAAGs, USSOUTHCOM Headquarters and its components. When approved by the Secretary of Defense, the POM serves as the basis for the Department of Defense's budget appropriation request in support of the annual regional Security Assistance Program.

The actual implementation of the approved program requires dynamic management to accommodate continuous updating of requirements and to ensure effective utilization of available funds. Management procedures must respond to influences generated by participating

Panama Canal Defense

Most Important U.S. Southern Command Mission

The United States Southern Command, which has the primary mission of defending the strategic Panama Canal, traces its origins to 1903 when the first U.S. Marines arrived in Panama to protect the Panama railroad that connected the Atlantic and Pacific oceans across the narrow waist of the Panamanian Isthmus. The Marines remained to provide security during the early construction days of the Panama Canal. Then, in 1911, the first troops of the U.S. Army's 10th Infantry Regiment arrived at Camp E. S. Otis, on the Pacific side of the Isthmus, to assume the main responsibility for Canal defense. In 1914, the Marine Battalion left the Isthmus to participate in operations against Pancho Villa.

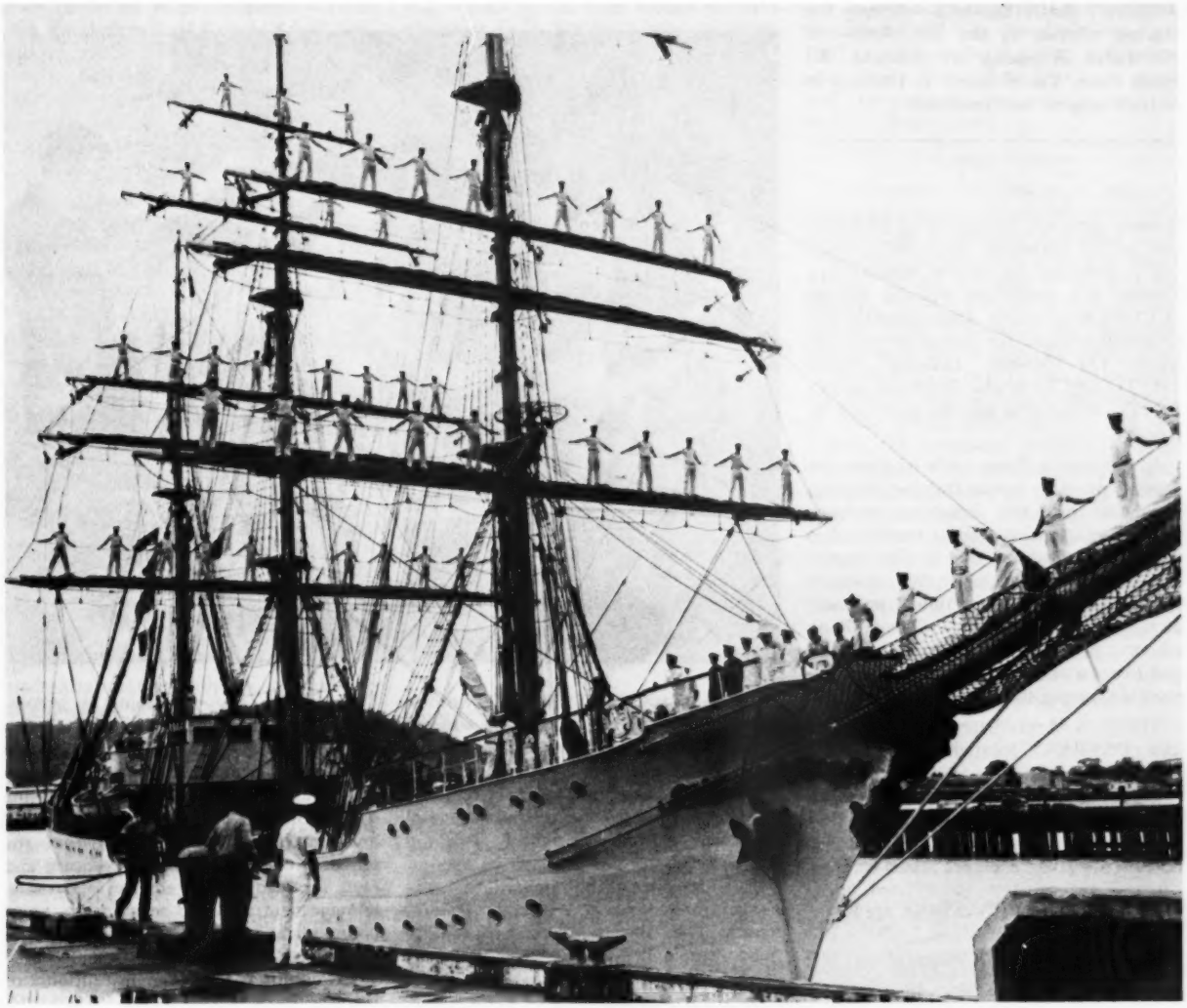
The first company of coast artillery troops arrived in 1914 and later established coast artillery fortifications at each terminus (Atlantic and Pacific) of the Canal, with mobile forces of infantry and light artillery centrally located to support either terminus. By 1915, a consolidation of command was designated as Headquarters, U.S. Troops, Panama Canal Zone, under the Army's Eastern Department, with Headquarters at Fort Jay, Governor's Island, New York.

On July 1, 1917, the Panama Canal Department was activated as a geographic command of the U.S. Army. It remained as the senior Army headquarters until activation of the Caribbean Defense Command on February 10, 1941, with Lieutenant General Daniel Van Voorhis as its first commander. General Van Voorhis also continued to command the Panama Canal Department.

The new command eventually assumed operational responsibility over air and naval forces assigned in its area of operations. By early 1942, a Joint Operations Center had been established at Quarry Heights. In the meantime, military strength in the area was gradually rising and reached its peak in January 1943, when 68,000 personnel were defending the Panama Canal.

In December 1946, the President approved recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a comprehensive system of military commands to put responsibility for conducting military operations of all military forces, in various geographical areas, in the hands of a single commander. Thus, the principle of unified commands was established and the Caribbean Command was one of them. Although the Caribbean Command was designated by the Defense Department on November 1, 1947, it did not become fully operational until March 10, 1948, when the old Caribbean Defense Command was inactivated.

On June 6, 1963, reflecting the fact that USSOUTHCOM had a responsibility for U.S. military operations primarily in Central and South America, rather than in the Caribbean, the command was formally redesignated as the United States Southern Command. Concurrently, its military components were respectively renamed U.S. Army Forces Southern Command, U.S. Navy Forces Southern Command and U.S. Air Forces, Southern Command. All remained headquartered in the Canal Zone, as they are today.



U.S. Naval Support Activity sailors man the lines of a Colombian training ship during a Canal Zone visit.

countries and by fiscal or political restraints imposed by higher authority.

Since the early 1950s, the United States has provided nearly $600 million in grant materiel assistance to Latin American armed forces. Following a high of $60 million in 1966, our grant materiel program has been significantly reduced as the responsibility for equipping their armed forces is shifting to the countries themselves. The Security Assistance trend is towards sales, although a minimal grant materiel program is still planned where the need exists.

Latin American Training

Grant training has been an effective instrument for improving the armed forces of participating nations. This has been a relatively stable program and has not seen a decreasing trend similiar to that of the grant materiel program. Our annual program requirement has been stabilized at about $10 million for several years and is expected to remain at that level for the foreseeable future. The trend shows a noticeable increase in the sophistication of requested training. Basic instruction is being supplanted by advanced career and management training. Curriculum at Service component schools in the Canal Zone require continuous revision to accommodate this trend. The magnitude of grant training provided Latin American officers and men in Continental United States (CONUS) and Canal Zone schools is impressive. As of the end of FY 73, the Latin American alumni body numbered more than 70,000 graduates, of which about two-thirds received their training in the Canal Zone.

The FY 73 USSOUTHCOM grant

AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE—Among the courses offered by the Inter-American Air Force Academy at Albrook Air Force Base, Canal Zone, is training in aircraft engine maintenance.

training program amounted to $9.3 million for 17 countries. Essentially, training is provided by several means: (1) Formal and on-the-job training courses at CONUS or Canal Zone schools; (2) Orientation tours for senior service colleges; (3) Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) and Technical Assistance Teams (TATs) to assist in specific problems in-country.

In the Canal Zone, each of the components provides formal training designed especially for Latin American students. This training meets critical needs and is especially suited to the smaller countries which do not have the capability to conduct extensive training on their own. Furthermore, the Canal Zone schools promote regional cooperation and foster a sense of fraternity and comradeship among their graduates.

The U. S. Army School of the Americas (USARSA), located at Fort Gulick on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus, provides a full field of education in more than 40 courses from command and staff courses for senior officers to functionally oriented specialized-training courses for cadets and enlisted men. Courses conducted at USARSA are based on similar courses given at U. S. Army schools in the United States.

The USARSA faculty includes 42 guest instructors from 15 Latin American countries. The guest instructors are selected from the school's distinguished graduates and are invited for a one year tour-of-duty.

The Inter-American Air Forces Academy (IAAFA) is a major suborganization of USAFSO and is the Air Force counterpart to USARSA. The academy is located at Albrook AFB and provides technical training in aeronautical specialties for officers and airmen of all Latin American countries. Although the school was formally established in 1948, its antecedents go back to 1943, when the Peruvian Air Force requested that 20 of its mechanics be permitted on-the-job training on the flight line at Albrook AFB. Gradually, the instruction was expanded to other technical fields as needed by guest airmen.

IAAFA is composed of two schools: the Officer Professional Education School and the Airman Technical Training School. The former presents courses to officers in special air operations, academic instruction, and aircraft maintenance. The Airman Technical Training School maintains a flexible curriculum so that courses may be added or dropped to meet the training needs of Latin American Air Forces. Programs have been developed to provide technical training for air force personnel from the unskilled level through a full spectrum of proficiency to the supervisory level.

As in USARSA, the IAAFA courses are conducted by U. S. and Latin American instructors. There are normally about 10 to 15 guest instructors on the faculty. The academy also provides a service through which pertinent U.S. Air Force publications are translated into Spanish for worldwide distribution.

Like the Army and Air Force component commanders, the Commander of USNAVSO is responsible for providing special schools and training classes in the Canal Zone. Navy training is accomplished by the Small Craft Instruction and Technical Team (SCIATT), located at the Naval Support Activity at Rodman on the Pacific side of the Isthmus. Using a 40-foot utility boat as a school ship and employing bilingual instructors, the school provides training for officers and men in engine maintenance, electricity, damage control, basic seamanship, voice communications procedures, operations and navigation.

In addition to these institutions of learning in the Canal Zone, USSOUTHCOM components annually deploy MTTs and TATs throughout Latin America. These teams are highly effective and much appreciated. They are sent to the Latin American countries at the specific request of the host-government to instruct military personnel in particular skills not offered at any of the resident courses. Teams have been of immense value in providing operational and maintenance instruction and in-depth training in many areas of civic action.

The FY 73 USSOUTHCOM grant materiel program was based originally on a funding level of $9.3 million for seven selected countries. Because of the lack of legislative action, the final pro-

gram permitted under available Continuing Resolution Authority (CRA) funding was $4.6 million. Appropriations, even though not supporting major modernization programs for the recipient countries, did provide for some priority support of internal security and civic action requirements.

A fairly recent adjunct to the Security Assistance Program has been the provision to allied countries of military articles excess to U. S. requirements. These articles encompass a wide range of items, from major equipment such as aircraft and trucks to spark plugs and fan belts. They are offered on a grant basis to those countries eligible for grant aid or as reduced price sales items to others. Since 1969, Latin American countries have received, on a grant basis, nearly $23.5 million worth of equipment under the Excess Defense Articles program.

As Latin American countries become more dependent upon their own economic resources for modernization of their armed forces, Foreign Military Sales (FMS) become increasingly important in our regional Security Assistance Program. With respect to desire for force modernization, it is significant that the area abounds with U. S.-provided World War II and Korean War equipment which in most cases is extremely difficult and expensive to maintain in operable condition. Modernization efforts have been modest and do not constitute an arms race. The desire to enter the jet age and to retain and attract competent professionals in their armed forces are compelling reasons for the procurement of modern, supportable equipment.

Based on more than a quarter century of reliance on U. S. military equipment and training, Latin American armed forces naturally have looked to us as a priority source for equipment procurement. In many cases we have been limited in our ability to support their requests. This has contributed to a situation wherein various Latin American armed forces have turned to third countries to fulfill their modernization needs. Since 1966, our sales participation has amounted to only about 25 percent of nearly $2 billion in total regional procurements. Thus far, with minor exceptions, third country procurements have been from western European or other allied nations. However, communist bloc countries, through continually expanding trade and diplomatic representation, are capable of increased and competitive participation in the dynamic Latin American military market. This significant change in the traditional sales pattern is receiving heightened scrutiny on the U. S. side.

Humanitarian Search and Rescue

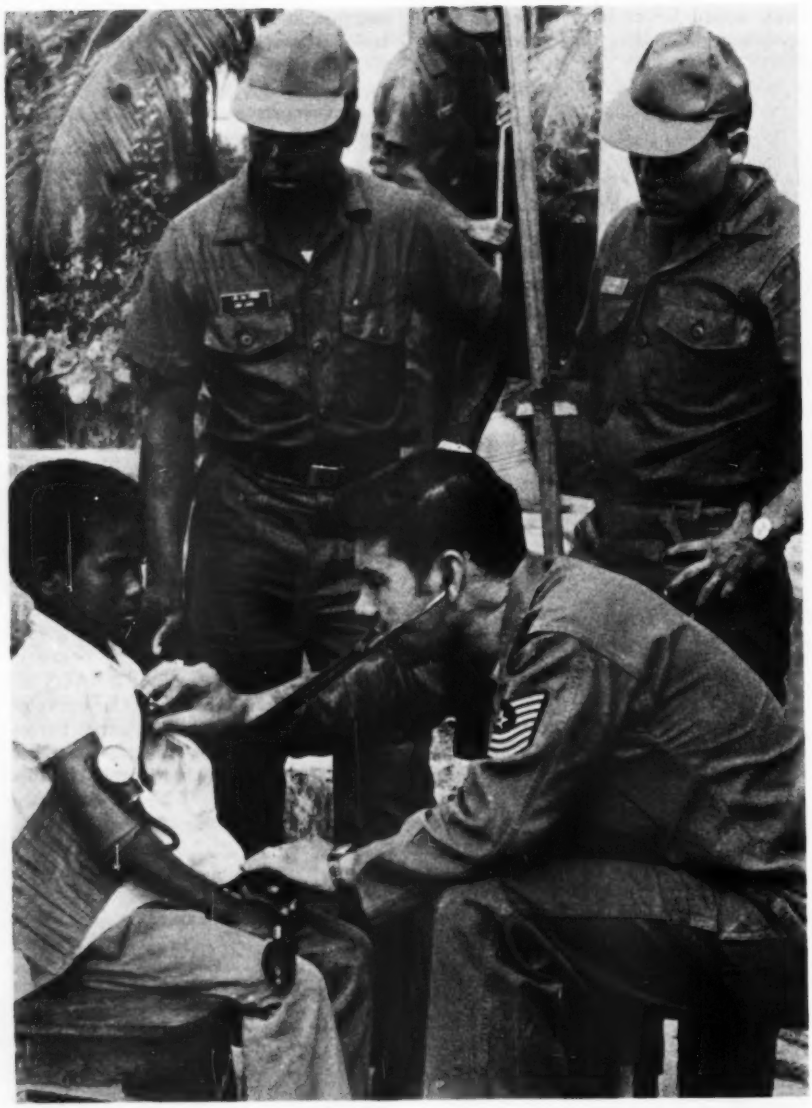
The primary resources for search and rescue are the HH-3 helicopters provided by the Military Airlift Command's Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service. Also available and employed on search and rescue missions are USAFSO C-118, 0-2 and UH-1N aircraft, the Tactical Air Command C-130s, Air Force Reserve C-123s on rotational duty with USAFSO; and Army aircraft of USARSO.

As search and rescue commander for USSOUTHCOM, COMUSAFSO plans, coordinates, and directs search and rescue activities through his Rescue Control Center (RCC). For Calendar Year 1972, 110 missions, requiring 376 sorties were flown. Thirty-eight lives were saved and assistance was rendered to an additional 375 personnel.

Mapping Mission

A little-mentioned but highly influential activity is U. S. Southern Command's participation in the Inter-American Mapping and Charting Program. The major element of this program is the Defense Mapping Agency's Latin American component, the Inter-American Geodetic Survey (IAGS). It has, for more than 25 years, worked closely with cooperating countries in contributing to development of their cartographic agencies and obtaining the necessary geodetic data to support integrated national mapping programs. In addition to field representatives in cooperating countries, IAGS operates a cartographic school in the Canal Zone which conducts courses in mapping, charting and geodesy skills. More than 3,000 mapping technicians have graduated from the school since it began in 1952. Concurrently with the IAGS effort, the USAF's Aerospace Cartographic and Geodetic Service sends aerial survey teams to Latin America to accomplish cartographic aerial photography in sup-

DISASTER RELIEF—A critically ill man is brought by a U.S. Air Forces, Southern Command helicopter from the interior of Panama to a waiting ambulance to take him to a hospital. Last year, U.S Air Force and Army helicopters and aircraft in the Canal Zone responded to more than 100 calls.



MEDICAL/CIVIC ACTION—A medical technician checks the heart of a small boy during a Medical/Civic Action mission into an isolated area of Panama.

port of both U. S. and host country mapping activities.

Disaster Relief

A dramatic form of U. S. assistance has been our response to disaster situations. Disaster relief planning and rescue missions in Latin America are major and continuous functions of USSOUTHCOM. Prompt and responsive disaster relief assistance permits the command to cooperate with others in relieving human misery and suffering.

During the past six years, the United States has responded to more than 80 disasters in Latin America. These disasters have varied dramatically in scope and complexity. The severe Peru earthquake of May 1970 involved direct USSOUTHCOM coordination of support of that country by over 200 persons, 35 aircraft and one aircraft carrier.

USSOUTHCOM has, for example, provided disaster relief assistance for flood victims in Paraguay, Panama, Bolivia, Peru, and Costa Rica; a food poisoning incident in Honduras; snow storms and an earthquake in Chile, and a hurricane in Nicaragua.

Our most recent major effort occurred in December 1972, when a devastating earthquake struck Managua, Nicaragua, totally destroying 13 square kilometers within the city. Of a population of 400,000, there were more than 12,000 known dead, 20,000 injured and more than 300,000 left homeless.

The Command's aircraft flew more than 200 sorties, carrying one million pounds of cargo consisting of hospitals, support equipment, emergency supplies and food.

The key figure in disaster operations of whatever size is the U. S. Ambassador in the country affected. If appropriate, the Ambassador requests assistance in the form of services, such as a requirement survey, medical aid, water purification and transportation. When emergency action clearly is necessary to prevent further loss of life or to relieve suffering, and time does not permit prior approval through diplomatic channels, USSOUTHCOM can respond to requests directly from U. S. military commanders on-site.

AID Interface

Based on the history of disasters in Latin America, the U. S. Agency for International Development (AID), in cooperation with USSOUTHCOM, has established a unique stockpile of disaster relief support materials in the Canal Zone. It includes more than $185,000 worth of disaster relief essentials, such as tents, blankets, cots, and cooking and eating utensils. Also included are shallow-draft boats with outboard motors and accessories, and a stock of medical supplies.

Coincident with the development of Latin American armed forces through grant aid materiel, grant aid training and FMS programs, USSOUTHCOM supports regional inter-Service cooperation

All photographs appearing in this issue of Commanders Digest were provided by Headquarters, United States Southern Command, Quarry Heights, Canal Zone, Panama.

through combined exercises. USSOUTHCOM assists in establishing integrated command and control centers with common operating procedures, aids in development of combined military plans, and fulfills an advisory role as appropriate.

The Central American Defense Council (CONDECA) is a regional organization assisted by USSOUTHCOM. CONDECA's day-to-day activities are conducted by its Permanent Commission (COPECONDECA), located in Guatemala City. COPECONDECA has successfully planned and conducted surveillance/intercept and irregular warfare exercises.

Similarly, USSOUTHCOM supports naval exercises, such as UNITAS, which are designed not only to increase the effectiveness of operations of the naval forces of Latin American countries, but also to strengthen the long tradition of naval cooperation within the hemisphere. This year's UNITAS XIV marks continuation of the annual series of training exercises, embracing forces from maritime nations of South America and the United States.

Thus far, we have emphasized the role of USSOUTHCOM and its component commands in carrying out assigned responsibilities; however, the key to success is the competence of the officers and men on the USMILGPs and USMAAGs. We depend on these joint organizations to provide the professional advice and assistance sought by their host country armed forces. In addition, USMILGPs/USMAAGs initiate planning and implement the approved and funded Security Assistance Program for their respective countries. On their personnel also falls the responsibility for coordination of U. S. disaster relief efforts. Theirs is a complex assignment, requiring consummate professionalism, language fluency, exemplary personal qualities, uncommon finesse and ability to produce within the joint and combined environments.

In addition, the USMILGP Commander or Chief of the USMAAG is the U. S. Ambassador's principal advisor on military matters and, as such, is an important member of the country team. He often provides the Ambassador the primary means of liaison with the senior host-country military officials.

In summary, USSOUTHCOM, as an integral part of the unified command structure, is performing a vital military mission in an area of prime importance to the national interests of the United States. In carrying out the Command's missions, the men and women of USSOUTHCOM, its Service components, and its USMAAGs and USMILGPs, deal with many distinctive, individualistic, increasingly nationalistic sovereign nations who have been our traditional friends and allies. Our total effort is dedicated to strengthening our ties with them and to furthering U. S. national objectives as they apply to Latin America.

From Ships and Jungles

Search and Rescue Activities Aid Hundreds

Of USSOUTHCOM's many missions in Latin America, one of the most satisfying is its search and rescue activities. Over the years, hundreds of sick and injured persons have been evacuated for medical treatment from ships at sea or from isolated communities in the interior regions of Panama.

The U.S. Air Force component of USSOUTHCOM is charged with directing the search and rescue (SAR) missions of the command, and operates its Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) at its headquarters at Albrook Air Force Base in the Panama Canal Zone. This Center is responsible for coordination of all United States search and rescue operations—both air and sea—in Central and South America.

Primary agency for accomplishment of USSOUTHCOM's rescue and recov-

RADIO REPAIR—A Spanish speaking U.S. Army instructor teaches a Latin American student radio repair at the U.S. Army School of the Americas, Fort Gulick, Canal Zone.

ery work is Detachment 2 of the Military Airlift Command's 39th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery. The detachment flies 3 HH-3E "Jolly Green Giant" helicopters, the workhorse aircraft for search and rescue (SAR) missions, and also operates the RCC at Albrook.

However, the overall SAR effort of USSOUTHCOM is actually multi-Service U.S. Army Forces Southern Command aircraft are frequently called upon, as are other fixed and rotary wing aircraft on duty with U.S. Air Forces Southern Command, to fly relief missions. U.S. Navy Forces in the Southern Command also play key roles in furnishing vital ship-to-shore communications in many high seas rescues.

Last year, the Rescue Coordination Center handled more than 100 search and rescue missions and was credited with saving 38 lives through the rapid evacuation of critically sick or injured for medical treatment. Scores of others also were helped.

Most of the search and rescue missions were flown in Panama or over adjacent waters of the Pacific Ocean or the Caribbean Sea. Many of the missions were highly complex, and often, because of distance and overwater flight requirements, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft worked in a closely coordinated effort to complete their life-saving work.

Such was the case on March 24 of last year, when the crews of two Air Force C-130 aircraft and an HH-3 helicopter took part in a medical evacuation mission to recover two seamen who had been injured and severely burned in an engine room explosion aboard their ship in the Caribbean Sea, 290 miles northwest of Panama City.

The injured men were crewmen of the U.S. merchant vessel Banana Planter, enroute from Puerto Limon, Costa Rica, to North Carolina.

The helicopter was dispatched at 10 o'clock that morning, shortly after the USAFSO RCC had been notified of the situation. Meanwhile, a C-130 already in the air on another mission was diverted to locate the ship and guide the helicopter to it for the pickup. At the same time, another C-130 crew was dispatched to relieve the first aircraft and provide top cover for the helicopter on its return trip.

After the two injured seamen were hoisted aboard the helicopter, they were flown to Puerto Limon and transferred to the second C-130 which rushed them to a waiting ambulance which delivered them to Gorgas Hospital in the Canal Zone.

Another example of a well-coordinated recovery in 1972 came when the RCC was notified by the U.S. Navy Operations Center that a seaman aboard the SS Inger, a 600-foot bulk carrier, was lapsing into a coma and was in desperate need of an insulin and saline solution. A C-130 departed at dawn and at 8:05 a.m. made parachute drops of two parcels of the solution and intravenous fluids to the ship, which was located some 100 miles off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

Three hours later, the RCC was notified that the seaman's condition was no better and the ship requested that he be airlifted immediately to Gorgas Hospital. The same C-130 crew and one of the HH-3 crews were alerted for the mission.

The HH-3 was launched at 1 p.m. and the C-130 departed an hour later with drums of fuel on board for the helicopter's return flight. At 3:35 p.m., the ship was located by the C-130, which directed the helicopter to the vessel. After the patient was hoisted aboard the hovering helicopter in a Stokes litter, the aircraft rendezvoused at San Jose, Costa Rica, where the patient was transferred to the C-130 for the flight back to the Canal Zone.

Although SAR personnel are called on frequently to search for missing boats, aircraft or individuals lost at sea, in the jungle or elsewhere, most calls concern requests to recover persons who are sick or injured. Panama has few highways, and many small settlements not easily accessible by any other means than light aircraft or helicopter. When medical emergencies occur in these remote areas, sick or injured persons are often rushed for treatment to Panama City or Colon aboard U.S. military aircraft.

The RCC and detachment helicopter crews are on alert around-the-clock to assist ships at sea or persons of any nationality anywhere in the area who need help. For example, during the spring of 1972, detachment helicopter crews on two occasions evacuated members of the British Trans-American Expedition, crossing the Darien jungle gap, the only uncompleted stretch of the Pan-American highway. Because of the thickness of the Darien jungle, helicopter airlift was the only quick means of recovering the patients, both of whom might have died, if such a quick med-evac response had not been available.

A UH-1N "Twin Huey" is off-loaded at Howard Air Force Base to become part of the USSOUTHCOM aircraft inventory.

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